

Why Are Family Dinners So Important?

Regardless of a teen's gender, family structure or family socioeconomic level, research by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University finds that kids who eat dinner with their families often also are more likely to:

- Do well in school.
- Be emotionally content.
- Have positive peer relationships.
- Have healthier eating habits.
- Have lower levels of stress and be bored less often.
- Be at lower risk for thoughts of suicide.

What's the Harm in Skipping Family Meals?

CASA research also finds that teens who have dinner with their families two nights a week or less are:

- Four times more likely to smoke cigarettes.
- Three times more likely to smoke marijuana.
- Nearly twice as likely to drink alcohol.
- More likely to have sex at a younger age.
- More likely to get into fights.

More Information

Information on the Benefits of Eating as a Family

www.casafamilyday.org

www.cfs.purdue.edu/CFF/promotingfamilymeals

www.mealsmatter.org

www.poweroffamilymeals.com

Recipes and Meal Ideas for Families

www.mealtime.org

www.allrecipes.com

www.bettycrocker.com

www.kraftrecipes.com



What **One** thing will help improve your kids' grades, make them less likely to do drugs, and help them eat nutritiously?

***EATING TOGETHER
AS A FAMILY!***

Learn more about how eating together as a family can improve your children's well-being in a number of areas.



What Does Research Indicate About the Positive Effects of Eating as a Family?

Whether a family comes together to share meals can have a significant impact on a variety of outcomes. Family meals are positively associated with improved dietary quality, weight control, enhanced language acquisition and academic performance by children, improved social skills and family unity, and a reduction in risk-taking behaviors.



We Value Family Meal Time

Surveys indicate that the vast majority of families (80 percent) value mealtime together, but the minority (33 percent) successfully achieve regular family meals.

Overcoming Barriers to Eating Together as a Family

- Make family dinnertime as much of a priority as work commitments.
- Coordinate your family's schedule to allow for shared meal times.

How Can You Encourage Family Meals in Your Home?

- Start the pattern of family dinners when children are young.
- Encourage your children to create menu ideas and participate in meal preparation.
- Turn off the TV and let your answering machine answer calls during dinnertime.
- Talk about what happened during everyone's day at school, work, or extracurricular activities
- Establish a routine associated with each meal, such as lighting candles, saying grace, or telling a story.
- After dinner, play a board game or serve dessert to encourage more conversation.
- Keep conversation positive and give everyone a chance to speak.

The Healthy Sandy Partnership encourages all families eat together as a family at least one night per week.